
ENGLISH LEARNING APPROACH BASED ON INTERCULTURE LANGUAGE TEACHING ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE ERA OF ASEAN ECONOMY COMMUNITY (AEC)

¹Endah Aprilia Purwaningrum, ²Nunik Nurhayati, ³Rizqy Isnaeni Fajri

¹*Sebelas Maret University
endah.apriliana.p@gmail.com*

²*Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta
Nn123@ums.ac.id*

³*Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta
rizqifajri87@gmail.com*

Abstract

This research aimed to 1) Identify the Indonesian government's role in enhancing the elementary school students' English capability to face ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA) challenges, 2) Identify the influence of English teaching implementation to the childrens' language development of the students in elementary school level, 3) Identify the effective approach to teach English for the students in elementary school without obstruct their language development. This research belongs to descriptive qualitative research and the data collection was done by library research. The results of the research were 1) The Indonesian government did not obligate English subject to be taught in elementary school level so the children are worried that they will not be ready to face ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA) challenges, 2) Teaching English to the students in Elementary School could obstruct their language development, 3) The effective approach to teach English for the students in elementary school without obstruct their language development is intercultural language teaching.

Keywords: ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA), Children Language Development, Intercultural Language Teaching

INTRODUCTION

ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) is the organization of the nations of Southeast Asia. This organization was established in August 8, 1967 in Bangkok through the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by five founder countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. ASEAN evolved into an influential regional community that now includes 10 member namely Brunei Darussalam (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos (1997), Myanmar (1997), and Cambodia (1999). As for Timor Leste is still in the process of becoming a member.

ASEAN is the gateway to get to the global economy where industrial and business activities in the ASEAN region. It means ASEAN members have the key to create the same economic behavior among ASEAN countries. As the result in 2015, Indonesian people were welcoming the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA), a community that is not only emphasizes the establishment of a single market from purely economic terms, but also pay attention to the unification of socio-cultural aspects especially the readiness of human resource. It is good project for us, but we should also have

a big duty to develop human resource quality. And this is also important thing to create the best strategies for sustainable development, poverty alleviation programs, cooperative education, and the empowerment of women and children in order to reduce the development gap which is still quite large among the member countries of ASEAN. Then, one of the strategies is by enhancing the children abilities to communicate in English as the media to communicate among AEC member countries. A research conducted by Taylor and Taylor (1990: 19) found that it is not a mistake to teach the children English as the second language in school. But, they also found that formal method, complex evaluation, list of attendance, and too much activities in understanding grammar could be an obstacle for the children in learning English as the foreign language. So, an appropriate approach to teach the children the English language in elementary school should be implemented in enhancing their abilities to face AEC challenges.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research belongs to descriptive qualitative research and the data collection was done by literature study or library research. Nazir (2003) affirms a

literature study is a data collection technique by doing a review study of textbooks, literatures, notes, and reports which related to the topic that must be solved. Then, Sarwono (2006) proposed a literature study is a research method used data collecting technique by collecting information from books, magazines, newspaper, and other sources to build a basic theory.

The data sources of literature study are taken from textbooks, journals, articles, research finding, internet articles, newspapers, magazines, etc. They are used by the researcher to compose the study systematically. So, the literature study included the common process such as identify the theory systematically, literature finding, and document analysis related the research topic.

The objectives of this research were: 1) To identify the Indonesian government's role in enhancing the elementary school Students' English capability to face ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA) challenges, 2) To identify the influence of English teaching implementation to the children's language development of the students in elementary school level, and 3) To identify the effective approach to teach English for the students in elementary school without disturb their language development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN (MEA) or ASEAN Economic Community AEC in the begining was the result of Konferensi Tingkat Tinggi (KTT) or The Association of Southeast Asian Nation - Summit (ASEAN - Summit) in 1997 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This result was the agreement to build the same vision of ASEAN members named as ASEAN vision 2020. The purpose of this vision was the ASEAN countries intend to change and develop their economic condition to be more prosperous each other.

Then, in 2003 the same conference was held in Bali, Indonesia. It also created the same policy. Then, Association of Southeast Asian Nation - Summit (ASEAN - Summit) was also held again in 2005 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and the aggrement was created in which all of the ASEAN countries decided to integrate the same economic behavior in ASEAN area through ASEAN economic community (AEC) project that would be implemented in 2020. But, its implementation had been done in 2015 because of some reasons. It was implemented 5 years early than the previous plan.

Usman(2016) affirms the AEC implementation will be created if three main projects could be done. They are included free trade product or service

stream, free investment stream, and professional labors stream that could work in ASEAN countries. In this case, AEC is regional agenda which is in line with ASEAN area development that consists of four pillars. Those are liberal direction trading system area, competitive economic area, average development area, and global economic ingrated area. So, this agenda is believed could give benefit to all ASEAN members.

But, it should be understood that the transfer process of benefit level to one another member was not the same. Virgianita (2017) states some factors included the effective strategy and policy being used to manage AEC challenges will determine the benefit level obtained by a nation of ASEAN members. Indonesia was noted to face the same challenges these recent years. Some challenges were the Indonesian labor average education level is less, the society's understanding of AEC is low, and some regions' preparation to face AEC are different.

Then, by understanding the previous explanation, we could agree that English is very important in order to make a success communication between the people of ASEAN countries in the era of ASEAN economic commnity (AEC) included Indonesian people.

Then, there are also three reasons why Indonesian should master English language to face AEC challenges. First, English is the key to understand and explore the knowledge all over the world. Nowadays, there are a lot of references using English language to help the students and teacher in educational institution. Second, English ability is factor to get the proper work. Many national and international companies require the workers who have good ability to communicate in English language. Third, the English language mastery could help someone to promote their local product into international trade scope. The real example is when the farmer could speak in English fluently, he could introduce his product to the foreigners through formal and informal activity likes seminar, conference, and direct selling in AEC selling processes. Besides, the survey result conducted by Lewis (2009) showed that English language is in the third range of the most used language from 172 languages around the world. This result showed us the people around the world's interest in using English. English language is also used by more than 112 countries in the world including some countries in ASEAN.

From the previous explanations, it could be inferred that the use of English language in the AEC era is very crucial. As the result, the government should prepare the young generations' English language ability to face AEC challenges. One of the

government's efforts to introduce and teach the children as the young generation English is by teaching them English language in elementary school.

But, since *Kurikulum 13* or K13 had been implemented in 2013, the position of English subject in elementary school was changed from local content subject into extracurricular subject and Fauzia (2014) states there are three factors influencing this policy. The first was the statement that English language is not appropriate to be taught in elementary school students because they are in the stage to learn their first language. Then, the second was the improvement local content subject which is included English only focuses on culture and leadership development. Next, the third reason was because English teaching and learning process in the elementary school have not given a significant achievement on the students' English ability yet. So, it is a good recommendation to re-investigate the decision of the government's policy related to the position of English subject in the elementary school to prepare the children's English ability without obstruct their language development.

In the era of AEC the domestic entrepreneurs could have the capability to "Go International". In this situation English ability will also be used. Step-by-step, the strategies that should be done in accordance with what was recommended in the pillars of the AEC blueprint in 2015 which requires each ASEAN country shall be reformed all the elements that become essential and absolute requisite sector in order to face the implementation of the AEC. This is in line with the reality in which economic globalization requires increasing competitiveness is strong in technology, management, human resources and continuous efforts in fostering innovation and creating cost efficiencies. So that, to compete in the preparation of a world without borders or borderless is by communicating with English language both written and spoken which can be used in economic, social, culture, education, and political sectors.

Then, when we talk about the use of English language as the key to communicate in AEC activities, a good understanding of English language itself should be obtained. Language is the important media to communicate in life. The children in the age of 6 until 10 year old have complex language development because there are a lot of factors influenced their language ability. In the real life, language development is a combination between social interaction, emotional development, and physical or motoric development. Furthermore, Arsjad and Mukti (2005) states language ability in adults consists of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skill. But, the other expert named Berk (2003) states that the language development of the children is not the

same with adults. He affirms the children language development consists of pre-linguistic development, phonologic development, semantic development, grammatical development, pragmatic development, and developmental or metalinguistic awareness.

When the children learn new language, it gives new challenge to their cognitive abilities. Hoff (2014: 216) explained learning two languages in the same time could limit the children's vocabulary mastery. He proposed one example related his statement that the children under 5 years old have the cognitive language capacity to learn only 20 new vocabularies in a month in which they only could learn 10 new vocabularies of their mother language and 10 vocabularies of foreign language. So, this limited ability could be the obstacle for children in learning foreign language. In the other statement, it will obstruct the children's language development.

Nowadays, there are a lot of Indonesian children learn English language. It means some children in Indonesia learn Bahasa Indonesia and English in the same time. Recently, a research found that a bilingual children or the children who learn two languages in the same time need more effort to speak fluently and use longer time to decide what sentence they are going to speak even though these two obstacle will not block their communicative ability. But, the other research conducted by Taylor and Taylor (1990: 19) affirms it is not a mistake to teach the children English as the second language in school. But, they also mentioned that formal method, complex evaluation, list of attendance, and too much activities in understanding grammar could be an obstacle for the children in learning English as the second language.

Next, Jefferson (1922) states the children's brain ability to master and memorize two languages will obstruct their ability to learn the other knowledge. This explanation informs us that the children ability to learn new language is limited. Next, Sapir and Nitzburg (1973) and Gage and Berliner (1975) in their research also found the children who study in the school and use English as the medium of instruction in their bilingual class tend to have some negative impacts in their emotional development, first and second linguistic competences mastery, and the ability to finish their study to speak. But, they also proposed the positive effect of bilingual class. They said the bilingual class did not give negative influence to the children's intelligence quotient (IQ).

Talking about teaching English to the children in elementary school, it could not be separated of the effect of mastering English language to their identity as the Indonesian children. And we agree that mastering the English language does not mean

forgetting or discriminate against Indonesian, but in this case we have to make the English language as a medium to introduce Indonesian to ASEAN countries. This is the true role of the English language for the advancement of Indonesia. This explanation is one of the reasons in choosing intercultural language learning as the appropriate approach to teach English to the children in elementary school.

The emergence of interculturality in language teaching could be states as a sort actually a innovation to qualify communicative language teaching. Byram (1997: 3) states that this innovation is pioneered by The Council of Europe, Common European Framework of Reference, which takes intercultural awareness, intercultural skills, and existential communicative competences as crucial elements to be applied in language learning. This approach emphasizes that in learning a second or foreign language; students are required to not only master grammatical or linguistics competence, but also be capable of communicating in socially and culturally appropriate ways. It also has relation with intercultural language competence.

In relation to the term intercultural competence as proposed by Byram et al. (2002: 7), it does not mean that the language learners should master and comprehend all cultural information that people have in the world. So, it is not possible if viewed that way. But the sense of intercultural competence is formulated as the appropriate ways that learners should acquire while communicating with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds and language diversities. Expectedly, the learners who acquire intercultural competence can mediate the complex condition that would be happened in communication and they are assumed to be able to maintain the communication with anticipating the stereotyping phenomena without conflict. The communication maintenance is carried out without changing their identity as well.

There are several important elements which should be known regarding intercultural competence. They are knowledge, skills, attitude, and the values someone has by virtue of his or her belonging to a social group. This value will then indicate his or her identity. Byram et al. (2002: 7) affirms those elements are such as the following highlight:

1. Intercultural Attitude

It refers to the Attitude of curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own. Learners' attitude in this context will become their predisposition to behave in an appropriate way while communicating. The first key point of intercultural attitude is to make relative the cultural diversity possessed by the

interlocutor. This attitude becomes a mediator for maintaining a successful communication.

2. Knowledge

This element comprises knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's own country. It also includes general processes of social and individual interaction. Knowledge in this case is identified into two categories. The first is knowledge of social process and products including the illustration of both of them. Then, the second is knowledge about the people (interlocutors from different culture) including how they will perceive us.

3. Skills of comparison, interpreting, and relating.

These skills indicate the ability to interpret documents or events from another culture, to explain them, and relate them to documents or events from the learners' culture. The importance of these skills derives from the learners' preparation for conducting communication.

4. Skills of Discovery and Interaction

In this element learners need to have skills to ask about the values, attitude, and behaviors possessed by their interlocutors. These skills refer to the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices, and the ability to operate knowledge, attitude, and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

5. Critical Cultural Awareness

It refers to an ability to evaluate critically on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. This awareness becomes learners' strength to realize their own cultural values and identity. It also leads learners to keep being conscious in evaluating their own cultural values and conceive how people can perceive their cultural values.

Next, as the next main topic discussed in this research intercultural language approach could be defined as an approach that known as a significant development from some traditional and current pedagogies for teaching languages that connects the study of culture to language and linguistics learning and sees them as integrated. Then, it requires students to reflect on the knowledge and assumptions they make about their own cultures as well as of those of the target language. They also reflect on the ways that languages embody cultures and manifest culturally significant attitudes and behaviours. It also enables greater student participation in the direction the learning takes as well as in advising on its content and processes. So, Implementing intercultural language approach means supporting the existence of intercultural dimension as another important

aim of language learning in order that students can maintain communication with interlocutors from different culture and language but need not change their identity.

Scarino & Liddicoat (2009: 35) recommend some essential principles to be brought, developed, and activated in the intercultural language teaching class. Those principles comprise five elements. They are:

1. Active Construction

Learning includes crucial and active involvement in creating and interpreting meanings while interacting with others, and keeping reflecting, thinking carefully, or realizing one's self and others in communication, and continuously thinking carefully of meaning making for a variety of contexts. It is actually not only understanding facts of related cultures, but also feeling, thinking, and changing intercultural beings.

2. Making Connection

There are two steps of development in learning process. First, learning develops interpersonally as it happens through interaction. Second, it develops intrapersonally as the process of knowledge construction within the mind of an individual. In the interpersonal development process, the schemata or previous knowledge is faced to construct new insights by means of connecting, reorganizing, elaborating, and extending their understanding. During these processes, constant links are made between language and culture and learning, previous or existing conception and new understandings, language and thinking, first language and additional languages, previous experiences and new experiences, the intercultural self and intracultural self and others

3. Interaction

The essence of interaction is to continuously developing one's understanding towards the relationship between the conceptualization of his language and culture and that of others. Meaning construction and negotiation within a variety of perspectives had by diverse participants happens during interaction. This circle helps each participant joining the interaction learn and also build intercultural experiences from one another.

4. Reflection

In learning, reflection means to realize or become aware of thinking, knowing, and learning process about languages (either first or additional) and cultures (both one's own and others'). The reflection in this sense also involves understanding the relationship and concept of diversity, identity, experiences, and intercultural thoughts and feelings.

5. Responsibility

In the process of learning, its development is

dependent upon learners' disposition, attitude, and values. While the communication or interaction is undertaken within the learning process, it includes accepting responsibility for one's way of interacting with others within and across languages and cultures.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) or Masyarakat Ekonomi Asean (MEA) is a change of trading system towards a liberal direction that allows producers from all over ASEAN to enter and seek market in other countries, including Indonesia. In AEC's note or blue print, it is written that English is the language that could be used among the people in ASEAN countries in daily marketing processes. So, it is important for the people of ASEAN members to apply their English language ability. But, in 2015 until present, the Indonesian government does not obligate English subject to be taught in elementary school level. This policy made the children are worried that they will not be ready to face AEC challenges. Furthermore, a research found that teaching English to the students in elementary school could obstruct their language development.

In the reality to enhance the children's ability to face the AEC challenges some elementary schools in Indonesia still teach English to their students. And, the effective approach to teach English for the students in elementary school without obstruct their language development is intercultural language teaching. Through this approach, the students will understand that mastering the English language does not mean forgetting or discriminate against Indonesian, but in this case they and the people around them have to make the English language as a medium to explore the knowledge in the real life and introduce Indonesian to ASEAN countries. This is also known as the true role of the English language for the advancement of Indonesia.

Enhancing children English ability in AEC era is the government's responsibility. So, it is suggested for Indonesian government to change the position of English subject in elementary school from extracurricular subject into class subject in elementary school to enhance the children to face AEC challenges. Then, the intercultural language teaching could be the effective approach to teach the children English language without obstruct their language development. This approach will make the children understand that learning English language does not mean forgetting or discriminate against Indonesian, but they and the people around them have to make the English language as a medium to explore the knowledge in the real life and introduce Indonesian to ASEAN countries.

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